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## STRACK'S 'ABOTH'

*Ausgewählte Mišnatraktate nach Handschriften und alten Drucken.* Veröffentlicht, übersetzt und mit Berücksichtigung des Neuen Testaments erläutert. Herausgegeben von HERMANN L. STRACK. *Pirge Aboth: Die Sprüche der Väter.* Vierte ganz neubearbeitete Auflage. Mit Vokabular und drei Registern. Leipzig: J. C. HINRICHS, 1915. pp. 40 + 44.

A CRITICAL edition of the Mishna is a desideratum which will probably not be supplied for a long time. The 'Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums' has announced for some time a great edition of the Mishna which, we hope, will include the whole manuscript material, but we have not heard yet what principles will be followed for the establishment of the text. Before a series of preliminary investigations has been successfully carried through dealing with the relations of the more important manuscripts towards one another, and determining which belong to the Palestinian and Babylonian recension respectively on the basis of the readings underlying the Talmudic discussions, it will not be possible to establish sound principles to guide us in this difficult undertaking.

Among the treatises of the Mishna that of Abot, the most popular and best known, has an exceptional position since it was incorporated into the prayer-book at an early period, and has accordingly been transmitted to us, outside the Mishna manuscripts, in numerous rituals of all the different countries. In these a sixth chapter has been added to the treatise (according to Friedmann, *Pseudo-Seder Eliahu zuta*, Vienna, 1904, p. 19, from Maseket Kalla, ed. Coronel, Vienna, 1864, pp. 13 b-14 b). and in some cases considerable additions have been incorporated into this new chapter later on; thus Taylor in his Appendix

to the *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers* (Cambridge, 1900) mentions three Yemen prayer-books [p. 44, MS. Bodl. 1145, p. 116, Brit. Museum 714 (see Cat. Margoliouth, II, p. 416, and *JQR.*, XVII, pp. 700-703, where the sixth chapter is published in full according to this MS. by Margoliouth), p. 112, Berlin 89 (Strack's J<sup>1</sup>)] offering a string of sentences, beginning with אֲשֶׁר־ between VI, 6 and 7; others again split off the last sentences of chapter V and, increasing them by a few more additions, form out of them an extra chapter, so that their treatise consists of seven chapters [see Taylor, p. 7, Brit. Museum 694 and Paris 636, pp. 42-4, Bodl. 1135, 1137, 1139, and 1142, p. 62, Cambridge. This form Meiri at the end of his commentary mentions as common].

If a classification of the manuscripts be undertaken we find that we have no means of applying to Abot the first criterion used in determining texts of other treatises of the Mishna, viz. whether they belong to the Palestinian or the Babylonian version. The Palestinian Talmud does not contain Abot in its editions and manuscripts, and while the Munich MS. and the first Bomberg edition of the Babli include a text of it, we cannot without serious investigation take this as representing the Babylonian version. A quotation, like the one in Yoma 21 a, where two of the wonders which happened in the sanctuary are omitted from V, 4, and expressly quoted as additional wonders from a Baraita, justifies us in becoming very sceptical in that respect; for MS. Munich has one of the two in the text of Abot, the *editio princeps* both, while we can see that in this case the Babylonian recension must have included neither. Of course this is a solitary instance, but it shows that the question is not so clear as Strack and others believe.

On the other hand the old commentators, who, by the way, mostly limit their works to the original five chapters, yield a rich harvest for the criticism of the text, and by their references to the prayer-books of the different countries give us a valuable hint for the classification. We shall have, in the first place, to determine whether we cannot discover a Spanish, a French, a Provençal, a Yemen type, &c. Probably in later times all the differences

were more and more obliterated through interchange from one country to the other, but the oldest manuscripts ought to give us useful indications in this respect. How little attention has been paid to this point up to now may be gathered from the fact that Taylor, as a rule, does not indicate the rite of the prayer-books containing the text in his catalogue of the Abot manuscripts. Besides the help the old commentators afford for classifying the manuscripts they also add greatly to the list of *variae lectiones*. Readings recorded by authorities of the twelfth to fourteenth century as going back to old and good copies after all are much weightier than many a later ritual, and it would be interesting to examine the readings of the copies of great scholars like R. Gershon or R. Ephraim found in Uceda's very valuable collection, מדרש שמואל. Great value was attributed to copies of the Mishna from Palestine, and such are quoted, e.g. by R. Isaac ben Solomon Israeli, Joseph ibn Nachmias, Simon Duran, and Yom Tob Lipman Heller, in their interpretations of Abot, while the Rashi commentary has a reading which it calls Tiberian. It is perhaps not out of place to collect these as a specimen in a note.<sup>1</sup> Only part of them we meet among Strack's variants.

<sup>1</sup> R. Isaac ben Solomon, the grandson of the commentator R. Israel Israeli, mentions several times an old vocalized Mishna MS. in his possession which was written in Jerusalem (שתא סדרי משנה ישנים מדוייקים) (ומנוקדים שנכתבו בירושלם). The passages are quoted in S. Sachs's unfinished lengthy description of Cod. Guenzburg 2, and in Taylor's Notes. The latter speaks of two manuscripts (p. 147), his manuscript evidently reading שנים for ישנים; p. 139 it actually has ב'. The readings of this manuscript are:

II, 1, תפארת לעושה ותפארת. R. Israel, his descendant relates, found a reading without ו in an old manuscript reputed to be from Jerusalem.

III, 2b, the gloss at the end, of which Rashi said it was not found in the Mishna MSS., although people generally recite it, was added by a later hand on the margin. He adds that all the Spanish MSS. have it.

III, 6, ומנין for מנין.

*Ibid.*, Ps. 82. 1 is quoted after שלשה; Amos 9. 6 after חמשה as Maimonides has it.

III, 11, the reading והמאדם, confirmed by Rashbam, is found on the margin of the codex.

A great many of these readings are incorporated in Taylor's 'Notes on the text' at the end of the Appendix. A systematic examination, however, has not yet been undertaken. Thus the

*Ibid.*, like Rashbam it does not read תורה before מעשים טובים.

II, 4 a is not repeated before IV, 14.

IV, 19, it has only the two Biblical verses without any addition. R. Joseph ibn Nachmias, פירוש פרקי אבות, ed. Bamberger, Paks, 1907, quotes his Palestinian Mishna-Codex ירושלמיות שחא סדרי משניות.

I, 4, וכצמא (so in his name Uceda ad 1; the edition wrongly בצמאה, for which the editor conjectures בצומאה!).

II, 4 a, עשה רצונו ברצונו . . . כרי שיעשה רצונו ברצונו (the edition is again to be corrected according to Uceda).

II, 7, דיון [like Aruk and, according to Duran, Maimonides, French texts and 'our' Mishna MSS.].

II, 14 omits דע (before מה שחשיב) and שכר פעולתך.

III, 11, המלבין for המאדם.

III, 13 b, it adds מעשרות סייג לתורה. [This reading occurs in a Responsum of the early Gaon Jehudai, *Responsa*, ed. Lyck, 19 b bottom, and was known to the Aruk (s.v. סג, Kohut, VI, 14)].

IV, 5 b, לאכול מהם for לחפור.

IV, 17, מכאן חיי for כחיי העולם הבא.

V, 21 is omitted.

Simon Duran, Magen Abot, Leipzig, 1855, p. 86 a, consulted an old vocalized Palestinian Mishna MS. (משניות ישנות שבאו מא"י שהם מנוקדות), which read in V, 10 שלי ושלך שלך חסיד שלך ושלי שלי רשע.

R. Yom Tob Lipman Heller, תוספות יום טוב, on I, 5 tells us that he had a Palestinian MS. containing, besides Abot, the first, fifth, and sixth order of the Mishna. Its readings are:

I, 5, כל המרבה שיחה.

II, 14 it omits שכר פעולתך.

IV, 2 it omits (נמחק) כבמורה.

IV, 5 a it omits (נמחק) לשמור.

IV, 10, ממעט עסק.

The Tiberian Mishna (מישנה טיברנית) mentioned in the Rashi commentary omits the Biblical verse at the end of I (which in the Palestinian Talmud, Taanit IV, 2, 68 a bottom, is added by the Amora R. Mana). A Tiberian Mishna with vowels is also mentioned for Nedarim by the anonymous commentator quoted as פירוש in Shiṭṭa Meḥubbeṣet ed. Zomber (c. g. 9 c, 16 b, 74 d).

task of preparing a critical edition of our treatise is a very complicated one, and it naturally cannot be solved incidentally with the preparation of a text-book as Strack puts before us. Still his edition comes much nearer offering a critical text than any of its predecessors, and therefore these considerations of the larger task are not out of place in a review of the new edition of Strack's little book.

When the editor, in 1882, for the first time approached the task of putting before the student who wishes to be introduced to the study of Rabbinical literature a corrected text of this interesting and important treatise, he only published the text of the common prayer-book in a carefully revised form. It is curious to find this text recommended in 1913 in Charles's *Pseudepigrapha*, p. 690, with the statement that it could hardly be improved; only the authorities for the text and the various readings are missed by the new translator. Yet that want had been supplied by the indefatigable editor in the second edition, 1888, which is based on seven manuscripts and the *editio princeps* of the Mishna. In 1901 a third edition appeared, again improved in many points. The present edition is an entirely new book. It is not only that the number of manuscripts has been increased by three; but they include the famous Mishna manuscripts of De Rossi and the late Prof. Kaufmann, together with MS. Cambridge, the most important codices of the Mishna which have come down to us. Krauss has shown in a very valuable study in *MGWJ.*, 1907, that Codex Kaufmann with MS. Cambridge and the Mishna text in the first edition of the Yerushalmi form a family by themselves; MS. De Rossi probably belongs to the same group. Strack having examined the three most important and best manuscripts of the Mishna is able to reach a much better critical principle than was possible with the material at his disposal for his former editions. He accepts the readings of these three capital manuscripts into his text wherever they agree. His text is accordingly more uniform, presenting a distinct type, whether it be Palestinian or not, and at every instance it is evident how carefully he has reconsidered each reading.

If anything is still left to be desired, it is that the fifth edition should considerably increase the variants under the text. In the first place all the readings of the above-mentioned three manuscripts ought to be given in full. Strack nowhere expresses himself about the principles he follows in adding or rejecting the readings not included in the text. As a matter of fact I was disappointed when I found that of the readings enumerated by Kaufmann, *MGWJ.*, 1897, pp. 43-6, as agreeing with the corrections of R. Joseph Ashkenas, several are not recorded in Strack's apparatus. We miss, e. g., the gloss כשהיא נדה in I, 5, the authenticity of which was the subject of much discussion by the early commentators; see Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, pp. xviii-xx. I, 16 the manuscript reads עומדות with ע; II, 2 לגור for גוררת; II, 4 b הל' ב; II, 7 it omits חכמה and צדקה, and has דונה for דונה (as R. Nathan had; see Aruch s. v. דו, ed. Kohut, III, 29), &c. From a collation of Codex De Rossi which Dr. Schechter made many years ago, and which he kindly put at my disposal, we learn that this manuscript also in I, 5 reads באשתו נדה אמרו (it continues חכמים, omitting six words by homoioteleuton); I, 7, it reads ואל תהי חבר; I, 8 בארכי, &c. In the second chapter it omits 4 a, inserting it between IV, 13 and 14, while many other texts have it in both places. About the variants of these most important manuscripts one would like to have very full information, but characteristic additions of other manuscripts ought not to be passed over entirely as is done with the אשרי sentences following in J<sup>1</sup> after VI, 6 at the end of the gloss recorded, p. 28\*, note p, according to Taylor (l. c. 113; see above). In I, 3 the same manuscript according to M. Cahn, *Pirke Aboth*, I, p. 13, reads מורא שם שמים. It would only increase the size of the volume by a couple of pages if all the variants collected in Taylor's Appendix should be incorporated; their number is not very considerable, and their addition would put before our eyes at a glance all the accessible material and save the trouble of consulting so many sources at every step.

Taylor's variants include the readings recorded by the old commentators who devote considerable space to the discussion of

textual questions, often mentioning the sources of their readings. The apparatus would greatly gain by this addition. Thus, to select a few examples at random, it is interesting that the addition of the title Rabbi to the names of the pupils of R. Johanan b. Zakkai in II, 8, found only in N, was objected to by Duran, that the addition **אבל לא על פי המעשה** at the end of II, 15 has in its favour the authority of Maimonides and Meir Abulafia, that in IV, 19 Rashi, R. Jonah, and Meiri read the addition **מלמד שמוחלין לו כל עונותיו**, which also occurs in an incunabulum of the Spanish prayer-book in the library of the New York Seminary, that in V, 5 R. Samuel ben Meir and R. Jonah read **כשעולין** for **שאלין**, that the reading **ארבעה קנינים** in VI, 10 is supported by Rashi (see Epstein, *החוקר*, I, 92 seq.).

Full references to the parallels in *Abot de Rabbi Nathan*, which are so indispensable for the higher criticism of Abot, as well as for the text, would also be a welcome improvement for the next edition.

Of course all these desiderata would enhance the value of the book for the scholar more than for the student and beginner in Rabbinics. But Strack's edition, as it is, is indispensable to the specialist, and will probably remain so for some time, as it contains material not accessible anywhere else. I therefore venture to suggest that in the next edition, which we hope will appear in the near future, the editor will enlarge the scope of his book in these directions in the interest of the specialist, and thus will lay new claims to our indebtedness to him.

Strack has added a too literal translation to the fourth edition, which is accompanied by short notes containing brief statements about the authorities occurring in the treatise, explanations, references to the New Testament, &c. giving a great deal of information in very brief space.

The short introduction preceding the text discusses the contents of the treatise, its redaction as well as the material used for the text, and adds a fairly full bibliography. Among the commentaries there is an omission of the oldest, the one ascribed to Rashi, and printed from varying manuscripts, Trino (not Turin,



as Taylor, *l. c.*, p. 11 end, has it), 1525, under the name of David Kimḥi, Mantua, 1560, Salonica, 1565, and, together with the commentary of R. Jonah, which is not mentioned either, Altona, 1848. The great Wilna edition of the Mishna, including Adeni's very important commentary and a useful collection of quotations and parallels in the Talmudic and Midrashic literature, as well as *variae lectiones*, is easier of access and more to be recommended than the Mishna-editions enumerated, p. 6\*. Maimonides's Arabic commentary has been published with the text of the Mishna according to the Berlin MS. (Strack's A) by Baneth, Berlin, 1905; see also Baneth's corrections of the Hebrew translation in *Festschrift Lewy*, Breslau, 1911. It is curious that the *editio princeps* of Abot, which appeared separately (with Maimonides's commentary), Soncino, 1484, is nowhere mentioned in the book. In Charles's *Pseudepigrapha* we read indeed, p. 690: 'Apart from the editions of the Mishna and of the whole Talmud, there is, so far as I know, no *editio princeps* of Abot!' Before it was included into the Naples Mishna Abot appeared again in the first Roman Machzor in the next year, and then in some early prayer-books like the German of c. 1490 found in the British Museum and the New York Seminary, and in the Spanish ritual mentioned above.

MS. L is not copied from the printed text of מילי דאבות, Constantinople, 1578-9; among a dozen readings in the first chapter recorded by Strack only those in notes n, x, y agree with that edition. Since, however, that commentary was finished in Lisbon in 1470, the note in MS. L may refer to a manuscript copy of the מילי דאבות from which the text was copied. The text in Bacher's edition of Ibn Aḳnin's commentary might have been used for the edition, since it is based on a manuscript. Of the commentary in Machsor Vitry Berliner has published a reprint, Frankfurt a. M., 1897. As to the liturgical use of Abot, instead of the indiscriminate mention of a few authorities, p. 4\* note, a reference to Zunz, *Ritus*, pp. 85-6 would be more in place; otherwise only the oldest author, Sar Shalom Gaon (middle of the ninth century) quoted in Amram Gaon's *Siddur*, and the custom

of the old Babylonian synagogue (בית רבינו שבבבל) recorded by him deserves mention.

Strack's *Ausgewählte Mišnatraktate*, six in number up to now, can be very warmly recommended. With their carefully revised and vocalized text, their good glossaries and notes, and their literal translations, they are the best means at the present time for introducing the beginner to the reading of Neo-Hebrew texts, offering, as they do, all the necessary help for a sound philological interpretation. The price of the modest little volumes is so low that they can be recommended even to those not very familiar with the German language used in notes and glossary, since nowhere else can they find equally reliable and correctly vocalized texts. Of course there are serious problems of higher criticism of the Mishna dealing with its structure and growth which are hardly touched by Strack, while other collections of a much more pretentious character try to offer new solutions even for these complicated questions. But since these hypotheses are based on an inadequate acquaintance with one, or in the best case a few treatises of the Mishna, they are of no value whatsoever, and in no way compare with those of Strack, which in the more limited field they cover are excellent, and must be consulted even by the specialist. Strack, who has devoted many years of patient labour to this branch of learning, fully realizes the difficulties of the task, and does not think of startling the reader with unfounded theories and discoveries which lack all basis. His work only gains by this attitude.

P.S.—Since I wrote the above a new treatise has been edited by Strack: *Berakoth. Der Mišnatraktat 'Lobsagungen'*. Mit Vokabular und drei Registern. Leipzig: J. C. HINRICHS, 1915. pp. 32 + 24. The new volume includes some of the prayers discussed in the treatise, and, as an appendix, the Palestinian version of the *Shemone Esre* published first by Dr. Schechter in the *JQR.*, X. The text of the Mishna is based on only three manuscripts and three editions, not including MS. De Rossi nor the Berlin Mishna with Maimonides, which is accessible in Weill's edition.

A comparison of Ginzberg's *Yerushalmi Fragments* would have been advantageous. Strack states here that he only gives a selection of the variants. In general the volume shows the same excellence as its predecessors.

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